

VZCZCXRO8604
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #0415 0460848
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 150848Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3302
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0437
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3301
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0238
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1343
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

UNCLAS JAKARTA 000415

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM ID](#)
SUBJECT: SUICIDE OF PAPUAN PRISONER IN ABEPURA CASE

REF: 06 JAKARTA 12800 (ACTIVISTS DENOUNCE ABEPURA

TRIAL)

¶1. (U) On February 2, 24-year old Yasya Echo Merano Berotabui ("Echo") died in Abepura Hospital after taking an overdose of malaria pills in a Papuan prison. He had been sentenced last July to four years for failing to obey police orders during the March 16 riots in Abepura, Papua (reftel).

¶2. (U) Of the 24 persons charged in connection with the riots, Echo had mounted the most spirited and coherent defense during his trial, making strong charges against the security forces. He was also a high-profile prisoner because he was the son of the Reverend Corinus Berotabui, moderator of Papua's largest Protestant denomination.

¶3. (SBU) A source close to the Berotabui family told us that Echo, already depressed about his incarceration, became despondent after he took a call on his handphone from his fiancée, who apparently broke off their engagement. Echo then tried unsuccessfully to reach his parents, who were traveling on church business. He then collected medication that had been distributed to his cell mates and ingested it. Prison authorities found him unconscious and took him to the Abepura hospital, where he died. His family asked that no autopsy be performed.

¶4. (SBU) Some activists remain suspicious about the circumstances of Echo's death. An NGO source told us there are rumors that the family of Echo's fiancée came under pressure from "third parties" to end their association with him. The source also questioned as to why Echo was not treated for an hour after his arrival at the hospital. While Echo's family is not seeking any redress and has not made allegations of foul play, the incident will likely remain the subject of speculation.

PASCOE